DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 354 085 PS 021 118

AUTHOR Gariboldi, Antonio; Livraghi, Paola
TITLE Quality of Care: Local Variations.
PUB DATE [91]
NOTE 16p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS *Child Caregivers; Class Organization; Classroom Environment; Classroom Observation Techniques; *Day Care Centers; *Educational Quality; Foreign Countries; Infants; Preschool Education; Program Descriptions; *Program Design; Questionnaires; Toddlers
IDENTIFIERS *Caregiver Role; *Italy (Pavia)

ABSTRACT

Conducted in 1991, this study surveyed the quality of day care centers in the province of Pavia, Italy, in order to provide a description of the centers and to trace educational patterns in the infant, young toddler, and toddler sections of the centers. The 32 day care centers located in the province employ a staff of 342 and provide 1,700 places for toddlers and infants. Questionnaires were administered to caregivers in each center. Most centers were organized in three sections, based on children's age. Two patterns of staff organization were: (1) the single role pattern, in which all staff carried out all tasks; and (2) the differentiated roles pattern, in which educational tasks were separated from service tasks. Analysis of questionnaire responses revealed that centers in townships with populations over 30,000 provided a higher quality of care than other centers, and that caregivers in the centers that provided higher quality care had continuous opportunities for in-service training and clearly identified duties. Analysis also showed two basic educational patterns in the day care centers. These were a maternal pattern, centering on the physical needs of the child, and a structured pattern, providing activities and experiences that focused on intellectual learning and the acquisition of social norms. Findings suggested that day care centers in Pavia need a clear social policy to coordinate initiatives in different townships and promote collaboration and exchange between centers. (MM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED354085

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Antonio GARIBOLDI - Paola LIVRAGHI

Quality of Care: Local Variations

Workers on early infancy tend more and more to link the development of cognitive and relational competence in children to the effects that particular environmental conditions have on the development processes. Research workers place emphasis both on the social components of the environment in which the child grows and also on the material opportunities of the non-human environment. In the light of this work, assessment of educational institutions for early infancy may mean not only the identification of those features which contribute to the smooth running of a centre, but also the aim of understanding the visible features of the educational model, or models, that guide the care givers in planning their work with the children. Our survey of the overall quality of day care centres in the province of Pavia had two aims: to provide a descriptive picture of these institutions, using the observational criteria proposed in Harms, Cryer and Clifford's ITERS, and to trace some aspects of the educational patterns which may be reconstructed observing and assessing the educational settings in which the day care centre is organized: infant and young toddler and toddler sections.

1. The statistical universe

The universe selected for our study, carried out in the first half of 1991, was the province of Pavia, situated in the Lombardy Region; it has 190 townships and a population of a little more than 500,000.
There are 32 day care centres in the province: the service is provided by 22 townships; the three largest (with a population greater than 30,000) have more than one centre - Pavia has 7, Vigevano 4 and Voghera 2. The populations of the other 19 townships which run centres are: less than 3,000 - 1 township, 3,000-5,000 - 8 townships, 5,000-10,000 - 7 townships, 10,000-30,000 - 3 townships. Globally these centres provide 1,700 places (1440 for toddlers and 300 for infants), and employ 342 staff, care givers and auxiliaries.

The centres are not evenly distributed over the province. Some areas have a high density of centres (the Lomellina - 13 centres - and the Pavese - 15 centres), while whole areas have almost no access to this educational provision (in the hill country of the Oltrepi Pavese there are only 4 centres). These centres are planned and set up by individual communal administrations, with no coordinated plan to link the various initiatives and to allow a fairer distribution of the economic resources and operating means available, that might favour all the potential demand in the province. The unprogrammed distribution of the centres in the province, with townships with populations of less than 10,000 running centres, is an urgent problem for the

PS 021118

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL IN OTHER THAN PAPER COPY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Antonio Gariboldi
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

TABELLA I
GENERAL CLASSIFICATION of the 73 Infant and Toddlers Sections

Sections	Means	External Coord./	Profess. Growth	Full use	Single Role
2AOT	4,63	yes	yes	yes	no
1AOT	4,6	yes	yes	yes	no
1AI	4,52	yes	yes	yes	no
1BOT	4,51	yes	yes	no	no
1AYT	4,5	yes	yes	yes	no
2AOT	4,5	yes	yes	yes	no
1AOT	4,49	yes	yes	yes	no
2AYT	4,46	yes	yes	yes	no
2AI	4,45	yes	yes	yes	no
1AYT	4,43	yes	yes	yes	no
1BCS	4,43	yes	yes	no	no
1AOT	4,4	yes	yes	yes	no
2AYT	4,34	yes	yes	yes	no
1BOT	4,31	yes	yes	no	no
1AI	4,29	yes	yes	yes	no
1AI	4,27	yes	yes	yes	no
1BI	4,27	yes	yes	no	no
2AOT	4,25	yes	yes	yes	no
2AI	4,24	yes	yes	yes	no
1BOT	4,14	yes	yes	=	yes
1BI	4,12	yes	yes	=	yes
2ACS	4,11	yes	yes	yes	no
1BYT	4,11	yes	yes	no	no
1BI	4,03	yes	yes	no	no
2BI	3,94	no	yes	yes	yes
2BYT	3,8	no	yes	yes	yes
1BYT	3,77	yes	yes	yes	no
1BYT	3,77	yes	yes	no	no
1AOT	3,74	yes	yes	yes	no
1AI	3,73	yes	yes	yes	no
1AOT	3,71	yes	yes	yes	no
1BI	3,7	yes	yes	no	no
1AYT	3,69	yes	yes	yes	no
1BOT	3,69	yes	yes	yes	no
1AYT	3,66	yes	yes	yes	no
2AI	3,64	yes	yes	yes	no
1AI	3,64	yes	yes	yes	no
1BCS	3,62	yes	yes	yes	no
1BOT	3,61	no	no	=	no
2BCS	3,6	no	yes-	yes	no
1AOT	3,57	yes	yes	yes	no
3BI	3,52	no	yes-	yes	yes
1AI	3,48	yes	yes	yes	no
2BYT	3,4	no	yes-	=	yes
2BOT	3,4	no	yes-	=	yes
1AYT	3,4	yes	yes	yes	no
1AYT	3,39	yes	yes	yes	no
1AI	3,38	yes	yes	yes	no
2BCS	3,37	no	no	yes	no

1BOT	3,36	yes	yes	no	no
1AOT	3,34	yes	yes	yes	no
2BOT	3,31	no	yes-	no	yes
3BOT	3,31	no	yes-	yes	yes
1BYT	3,26	yes	yes	=	yes
2BI	3,21	no	yes-	no	no
2BOT	3,17	no	yes-	no	no
1BI	3,12	si	yes	yes	no
2BI	3,06	no	yes-	no	yes
3BOT	3,06	no	yes-	yes	no
1BI	2,97	no	no	=	no
3BI	2,94	no	yes-	yes	no
3AI	2,91	no	yes-	yes	no
3AYT	2,86	no	yes-	yes	no
2BCS	2,83	no	yes-	yes	no
3AOT	2,83	no	yes-	yes	no
2BI	2,79	no	yes-	=	yes
2BYT	2,57	no	yes-	=	no
2BOT	2,54	no	yes-	=	no
3AI	2,52	no	yes-	yes	no
3AOT	2,42	no	yes-	yes	no
2BI	2,39	no	no	yes	yes
2BOT	2,34	no	no	yes	yes
2BYT	2,34	no	no	yes	yes

LEGENDA: I=Infant YT=Young Toddlers OT=Old Toddlers
A= Townships with population greater than 30000.
B= Townships with population less than 30000.
CS= Combined Sections.
1=The "Pavese" area; 2=The "Lomellina" area;
3=The "Oltrepò" area.
Yes-= yes, occasionally.

province of Pavia's day care centres.

In the 1980s, the progressive disinvestment by the State from social spending, and the massive growth in numbers of the beneficiaries of such spending, particularly the elderly, are some of the main reasons why new day care centres have not been opened and why others have been closed in smaller towns, where the financial costs for an expensive provision like a day care centre are felt more heavily.

Some first general data on the quality of the day care centres in our sample universe province should be considered in the light of the above. The replies given by the care givers to our questionnaire allowed us to identify a certain difference between the centres administered by small townships and those situated in large urban centres: the latter were favoured, with good management organization and superior professional qualifications of the care givers. In the larger townships, particularly Pavia and Vigevano, there were little or no problems of under-use of structures and the programming was better directed at resolving administrative problems and meeting the needs of the staff and clients. Alongside the large centres (58-60 places), there are also smaller centres (28 places) to provide an articulated response to the need for day care places in all city neighborhoods.

Almost all these centres are organized in three sections or are at least organized so that the children can be divided into age groups. All the care givers have an educational role and there are also auxiliary staff present. There are two patterns of staff organization in the province of Pavia: the "single role" pattern, where all the staff carry out all tasks, and the "differentiated roles" pattern, where educational tasks are separated from service tasks. In the centres located in small townships these important aspects of work organization are often overlooked; often indeed the opportunities for the professional improvement of the care givers are ignored or not seriously taken into consideration: generally they do not regularly attend refresher courses or seminars and do not benefit from the supervision of an external coordinator to guarantee the smooth running of the centre and its educational quality.

This is the tendency that emerges from the data provided directly by the care givers who replied to the questionnaire; a more complete picture is given by the findings of the ITERS assessment. See Table 1, which shows the general classification of the 73 infant and toddler sections considered together and presented in descending order of the mean combined score we assigned each section for the 73 items of the scale. The variability of the scores around the mean is quite low and therefore this figure is a good index of the original distribution (the standard deviation varies between 0.64 minimum and 1.68 maximum). The four interquartile groups identified in the general table differ significantly, according to ranked

analysis of monovalent variance, Kruskal-Wallis test, $p<0.001$. The best sections according to the assessment (first interquartile group) were in centres run by townships with a population of over 30,000 (40% of the sections run by the largest towns are in this group), which promote the quality of the centre via an educational coordinator. In these institutions, with a higher educational quality, the professionality of the care givers is assured by continuous opportunities for in-service training and by a clear identification of their duties (all the care givers have a "differentiated role").

Those sections whose quality level is low or insufficient according to the ITERS parameters (classified in the fourth interquartile group) are in a diametrically different situation. They are run by small townships, with a population of less than 3,000, or by the most important township in the area which has been found to be short of centres. The educational coordinator does not exist and the opportunities for refresher training are few or non-existent. In many cases the care givers are also responsible for the cleaning of the structure and the children's meals.

The assessment of the day care centres in the province of Pavia, in line with the findings of Monica Ferrari's Nationwide survey, shows the need for a more clear social policy as the determinating factor for the promotion of quality in these centres. This policy should coordinate the initiatives of the individual townships in a common program, incentivating the recognition of the professionality of the care givers, and institute educational coordinators to supervise the care giver meetings and to promote collaboration and exchange between centres.

2. The Infant and Toddler Sections in the centres in the sample universe

As in the rest of Italy, the day care centre admits children aged between 3-4 to 36 months, divided into sections. The sections occupy separate spaces within the day care centre building, have different furniture and materials and a different daily activity routine. Although there is the tendency in the centres for the educational settings to be characterized according to the age of the children, the survey carried out by Monica Ferrari on a sample of Italian day care centres, assessed according to Harms, Cryer and Clifford's ITERS parameters, has shown that there are no significant differences between infant sections (for children less than 12-14 months) and young toddler and toddler sections (for children of various ages, between 14 and 40 months), either when the quality of the organization of the educational setting is considered as a whole, or when six of the seven subscales of the assessment scale are considered individually. This finding led us to pose a number of questions: whether this similarity is an

TABELLA 2

THE INFANT SECTIONS

SECTIONS*	MEAN SCORE	*Subscales* 1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1° INTERQUARTILE GROUP								
1AI	4,52	5	3,4	6	4,8	6,2	3,7	3,8
2AI	4,45	4,6	4,1	4	4,2	5,4	4,3	4,5
1AI	4,29	5,6	3,7	5	3,4	5,2	3,3	4,3
1BI	4,27	5,4	3,6	5,5	3,8	5	4,3	3,5
1AI	4,27	4,8	3,7	5,5	3,4	5,8	3,3	4,3
2AI	4,24	4,6	3,4	4,5	3,8	5,2	4,7	4,5
MEAN	4,34	5	3,7	5,1	3,9	5,5	3,9	4,1
S.D	0,11	0,4	0,2	0,7	0,5	0,4	0,5	0,4
2° INTERQUARTILE GROUP								
1BI	4,12	4,8	3,9	4,5	4	4,6	3,3	3,8
1BI	4,03	3,4	4,2	4	4,2	4,5	2,7	4,3
2BI	3,94	4,4	3,8	3	3,8	5	3	3,8
1AI	3,73	4,2	3,2	4	3,2	5	3	3,8
1BI	3,7	4,4	3,6	3	4	4	2	4
1AI	3,64	4,2	3,4	3,5	2,6	4,8	2,7	4
MEAN	3,86	4,2	3,7	3,7	3,6	4,7	2,8	3,9
S.D.	0,2	0,4	0,3	0,6	0,6	0,4	0,4	0,2
3° INTERQUARTILE GROUP								
2AI	3,6	3,8	3,3	3	3,2	4,2	3,3	4,5
3BI	3,52	3,8	3,3	2,5	3,4	4,4	2,7	3,8
1AI	3,5	4,6	3,1	3	3,6	4	2,3	3,3
1AI	3,38	3,8	3,3	3	3	4,2	3	3
2BI	3,2	2,2	3,8	2,5	2,2	4,2	3,3	3,5
1BI	3,12	4,2	2,9	3	3,2	3,4	2,3	2,5
2BI	3,06	2,8	3,4	2	2,2	3,6	2	4,3
MEAN	3,34	3,6	3,3	2,7	3	4	2,7	3,5
S.D.	0,2	0,8	0,3	0,4	0,5	0,3	0,5	0,7
4° INTERQUARTILE GROUP								
1BI	2,97	2,4	3,2	2	2,6	4,4	2,7	2,5
3BI	2,94	3,8	2,8	2,5	2,8	3,6	2	2,5
3AI	2,91	3,2	3	2,5	2,6	3,4	2,3	2,8
2BI	2,79	3,8	2,8	2	2	2,8	2	3,5
3AI	2,52	2,6	2,9	2	2,6	2,6	2	2
2BI	2,39	2,2	2,7	2	2	2,6	1,7	3
MEAN	2,75	3	2,9	2,2	2,4	3,2	2,1	2,7
S.D.	0,2	0,6	0,2	0,2	0,3	0,7	0,3	0,5

LEGENDA= I=Infant YT=Young Toddlers OT=Old Toddlers CS=Combined Sections; A=Townships with population greater than 30000 B=Townships with population less than 30000. 1=The "Pavese" area;

2=The "Lomellina" area; 3=The "Oltrepò" area. S.D.=Standard Deviation.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

index of the existence of an educational philosophy in the day care centre which is strong enough to characterize uniformly the educational settings within it - the infant and toddler sections - or whether, alongside a strong educational model, which is able to characterize the sections of a centre in a uniform manner, there exist other educational models that may be identified by an assessment of the settings that is expressly aimed at finding any possible differences.

Study of the scores assigned to the infant and young toddler - toddler sections considered separately has shown the existence of a number of strong features which characterize the educational settings of the centre in a uniform manner. A significant separation between the two groups of sections emerges only when the organization of learning activities, and in particular the opportunities for the development of the child's verbal competence are considered.

We considered the two classifications separately in order to discuss the characteristics of each group of sections.

2.1. The Infant Sections (cf. Table 2)

The best Infant sections attained a score close to the mean value of 4.34, while the worst have a quartile mean which is very low - 2.75 - and is below the score of 3 which the scale considers to be the minimum level of operating sufficiency. Most of the Infant sections, those placed in the two central interquartile groups, present a mean score which is just over the "3" line - 3.86 and 3.34. If the mean values relative to the seven subscales are considered, it may be seen that the best sections - those in the highest interquartile group - increase their quality level by promoting the "furniture and material available to the children" - subscale 1 - linguistic interaction - subscale 3 - and more generally social interaction among the children and between the adults and children - subscale 5 - and by paying attention to the "adults' needs" - subscale 7.

Moreover subscales 1 and 5 present the highest means in all the interquartile groups, and in particular the mean score assigned for interaction between members of the group seems to be high. The variability between the scores in subscale 1 and 5 of the sections in the lowest interquartile group is greater, which indicates that dissimilarity is greater among lower quality situations.

On the basis of this data it may be stated that in the Infant sections there is generally a careful organization of the setting and that the establishment of a good relationship with the children is thus favored. However it is only in those sections which are generally better that a more complex and articulated educational pattern is

established, where the cognitive experience of the child is promoted, through play - subscale 4 - and verbal interaction - subscale 3. Affection and interpersonal relations, which are not however necessarily coordinated by articulate verbal exchange, are the only stimuli to which the child is subject that attends those sections judged to be less positive or of a low quality. The averages that represent subscale 4 in the Infant section quartile groups are in two cases below the minimum level - in the third and fourth quartiles - and even when those centres which were assessed as the best are considered, the mean is rather low - between 3 and 4.

In subscale 2 - "personal care and routines" - we found less difference between the quartiles. Since a stable score of 2 was generally attained for items 9-11, which relate to hygiene, it may be affirmed that the interquartile mean, which in 3 out of 4 cases is between 3.32 and 3.69, shows that other aspects of the centres' routines - arrival, meals and changes - have a positive value, which counters the insufficient finding for hygiene. In fact only those sections which were classified in the fourth interquartile group have a score which is lower than the minimum standard for "personal care".

A final consideration should be made concerning subscale 6, which deals with activity organization: only the centres in the first interquartile group attained a positive score in this field of analysis, while all the others had a mean score of below "3". This finding is above all influenced by aspects of the supervision of daily activities and cooperation between the care givers - items 31 and 32. In the first case we often assessed the infant sections as insufficient because the morning rest of the smallest children was not under regular surveillance. In the second case it should be noted that item 32 "staff cooperation" evaluates the duty-rostering and the substitution of absent staff, rather than good relations between the care givers. The assessment of these aspects as insufficient is based on the possibility of maintaining an efficient staffing levels, which is usually assured by the local administration which runs the centre.

A preliminary picture of the quality of educational settings for infants may be obtained from the observations made on the data relative to the infant sections classified by quartiles. In the best sections we found that the child is generally well looked after, even though hygienic conditions are not optimal, in a setting whose furniture and materials are purpose designed and which is made welcoming by a reassuring warm affective climate. In the lower quality sections the most positive finding regarded interaction between the members of the section and personal care routines - the assessment of this latter aspect was the most constant among the interquartiles. From this data an educational pattern which is almost exclusively articulated by the affective relation between the care giver and the children may be seen; this gives security and resolves unease: in most cases good interaction with the

TABELLA 3

OLD TODDLERS AND YOUNG TODDLERS SECTIONS

SECTIONS*	MEAN SCORE	Subscales 1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1° INTERQUARTILE GROUP								
2AOT	4,63	4,8	3,6	6	5	5,4	4,7	4,5
1AOT	4,6	5,2	3,7	6	4,7	5,8	3,3	4,5
1BOT	4,5	5,4	3,6	5	4,3	5,8	4,3	4,3
1AOT	4,5	5,2	3,6	6	4,7	5,2	3,3	4,5
2AOT	4,5	4,2	3,8	4,5	4,7	5,6	4,5	4,8
1AOT	4,5	4,8	3,7	5,5	4,7	5,8	3,3	4,3
2AOT	4,46	4,6	4	4,5	4,6	5	4	4,6
1BCS	4,43	4,8	4,2	5,5	4,6	4,8	4	3,5
1AYT	4,43	4,4	3,7	5,5	4,7	5,8	3,3	4,3
1AOT	4,4	4,6	3,1	6	5,1	6	3,7	3,5
2AYT	4,34	4,6	3,4	5	4,1	5,2	5	4,5
1BOT	4,3	5,2	3,9	4,5	3,9	4,7	4,3	4,3
MEAN	4,47	4,8	3,7	5,3	4,6	5,4	4	4,2
S.D.	0,1	0,4	0,3	0,6	0,3	0,4	0,6	0,4
2° INTERQUARTILE GROUP								
2AOT	4,25	3,8	3,6	5,5	4,6	5,8	3	4,5
1BOT	4,14	4,8	3,3	5,5	4	5,2	3,7	3,8
1BYT	4,1	4,2	3,6	4	3,7	5,6	4	4,3
2ACS	4,1	4,2	3,3	4	4,1	5,2	4,3	4,3
2BOT	3,8	3,2	3,4	5	3,7	4,8	3,7	3,8
1BYT	3,8	4,6	3,4	4	3,7	4	2,7	4
1BYT	3,8	4,2	3,2	5	4	4,6	3,3	2,8
1AOT	3,7	3,8	3,2	4	3,4	5,2	3	4
1AOT	3,7	3,6	3,2	4	3,7	5	3	3,8
1BOT	3,7	4,2	3,4	5	4	4,6	2,3	2,9
1AYT	3,69	3,6	3,4	4	3,3	5	3	3,8
1AYT	3,7	3,8	3,2	4	3	5,2	3	4
MEAN	3,87	4	3,3	4,5	3,8	5	3,2	3,8
S.D.	0,2	0,4	0,1	0,6	0,4	0,5	0,6	0,5
3° INTERQUARTILE GROUP								
1BCS	3,62	3,8	3,4	3,5	3,1	4	3,8	4
1BOT	3,6	3,6	3,9	3	3,6	4,6	3,3	2,5
2BCS	3,6	3,4	3,7	3,5	3,3	4,4	3,3	3,5
1AOT	3,57	3,4	3,2	4,5	3,6	5	2,7	3
2BYT	3,4	3,8	3,2	3,5	3,3	4	2,3	3,5
1AYT	3,4	3,8	3,2	3,5	3,3	4,4	2,3	3
2BOT	3,4	3,8	3,2	3,5	3,3	4	2,3	3,5
1AYT	3,39	4	3,1	3,5	3,4	4	2,5	3,3
2BCS	3,37	3,4	3,3	2,5	3	4	3,7	3,5
1BOT	3,36	4,2	3,3	3	3,6	2,8	2	4
1AOT	3,34	3,4	3,1	3,5	3,6	4	2,3	3,3
3BOT	3,31	3,6	3	2,5	3	4,2	3	3,8

MEAN	3,43	3,7	3,3	3,3	3,3	4,1	2,8	3,4
S.D.	0,1	0,3	0,2	0,5	0,2	0,5	0,6	0,4
4° INTERQUARTILE GROUP								
2BOT	3,31	3,2	3,3	4	2,7	3,6	2,7	4,6
1BYT	3,26	3,4	3,1	3	3	3,6	3	3,8
3BOT	3,17	2,6	3,3	3,5	3,7	4	3,3	3,5
3BOT	3,06	3,8	3,9	3,5	3,3	3,2	2	2,5
3AYT	2,86	3	3	3	2,4	3,4	2,3	2,9
2BCS	2,83	3,2	2,9	2	2,3	4	2,7	2,3
3AOT	2,83	2,6	3	2,5	2,7	3,4	2,3	2,8
2BYT	2,57	3,2	2,3	2,5	2,4	2,2	2	3,5
2BOT	2,54	3	2,3	2,5	2,4	2,2	2	3,5
3AOT	2,42	2,4	2,7	2,5	2,3	2,4	2,3	2,3
2BOT	2,34	2,2	2,6	2	2	2,6	1,7	3
2BYT	2,34	2,2	2,6	2	2	2,6	1,7	3
MEAN	2,79	2,9	2,8	2,7	2,5	3,1	2,3	3,1
S.D.	0,34	0,5	0,3	0,6	0,4	0,6	0,5	0,6

LEGENDA= I=Infant YT=Young Toddlers OT=Old Toddlers CS=Combined Sections; A=Townships with population greater than 30000 B=Townships with population less than 30000. 1=The "Pavese" area; 2=The "Lomellina" area; 3=The "Oltrepò" area. S.D.=Standard Deviation.

"infant" - mostly aged about one year - is the only component of the educational programme, which paradoxically has no other educational aims. The "domestic" character of the care given to the littlest children may be seen from the assessment of the organization of the settings: meals, rest and changes are conducted ignoring the hygienic standards which are not necessary when looking after a single child but are necessary in a community - hands are not washed and the diaper changing area is not cleaned between one change and another. The moments of personal care are structured so that they become the principal - sometimes the only - events in the course of the day, which is in fact completely or almost unstructured. The personal dimension of the affective relation with the child is emphasized but the possibility of constructing opportunities for learning and support for the growth and autonomy of the child are ignored. The findings show however that it is possible to organize infant sections differently (as the sections which we found were the best testify) and that this possibility is favored by a good organization of the care givers' work and the presence of in-service training: the best sections have the highest assessments in subscales 6 and 7, which relate to activity organization and adult needs.

2.2. Toddler sections (cf. Table 3)

To some extent the analysis of the mean scores of each interquartile group leads to considerations that are similar to those concerning the data for infant sections. The interquartile group for the best sections has a mean score of 4.47, while the mean score of the worst sections was 2.79. Similar scores were found for the infant sections. Furthermore, the two central interquartile groups present mean scores of around 3 - 3.87 and 3.45.

Analysis of the different subscale shows that the organizational model found in the best infant sections may also be identified in the best managed toddler sections: the only variation is in the mean score for subscale 4 which concerns learning activities, which is higher in the toddler sections. It is thus generally possible to make particularly positive assessments concerning interactions between the members of the day care centre, verbal exchange and opportunities for learning - subscales 5, 3 and 4 - for the better organized toddler sections. However, while the quartile mean scores in subscale 1 show a slight decline compared with those for the infant sections, which shows less attention paid to the furnishing of the setting, the data concerning linguistic and cognitive experience - subscales 3 and 4 - show that there is a more articulate educational pattern in the toddler sections, even though the dominant feature is still interaction. The two higher interquartile groups are characterized by a mean score of around 5 in subscale 3; the third interquartile group also has a positive score - 3.33 - and only the fourth group had an insufficient score in the assessment of language

learning. The aspects that concern learning were also more positive than in the infant sections, and not only the best sections pay attention to this educational dimension: indeed only the fourth interquartile group had a score below the ITERS minimum level. Other aspects of the organization of the day care centre, "schedule of daily activities", "personal care routines", and "adult personal needs" similarly characterized the infant and toddler sections. The sections for older children, even though some hygienic aspects are overlooked, also tend to emphasize routines - meals, arrival at the centre and rest. As in the infant sections, organizational problems were found when surveillance and the control of children and the programming of the care givers work was considered.

2.3. Infant sections and young toddler and toddler sections: some further considerations of the similarities and differences found between the two organizational models

Statistical evidence from the use of non-parametric tests (Mann-Whitney U test) to assess the significance of the differences found between the scores in the two classifications, and the study of rank correlations (Spearman rank coefficient of correlation) between scores in pairs of subscales, was used to check the tendencies identified in the classifications organized by quartiles. A similarity was found between the scores, except for the difference between the scores assigned to the two groups of sections in subscale 3, "listening and speaking" ($z=-1.98$ for $a=0.05$) and the significance of the rank coefficient of correlation between subscales 6-2 and 5-2. In the first case we found greater care in the young toddler and toddler sections for activity which promotes language learning (item 16 - books and pictures). Given that it is not possible to assess the degree of similarity between the scores in subscale 4 for infants and young toddlers and toddlers (because the parameters of judgement in the scale do not correspond), subscale 3 is the only subscale which contains an item of a largely educational character which allows comparison between different age groups. It is interesting to note that in the two cases discussed there is no correspondence between the two classifications, that is in infants the personal care routines of the children is associated with relational aspects - subscale 5 - whereas the opposite is true for toddlers ($rs=0.74$ subscales 6-2).

3. Further investigation of aspects of the educational patterns identified by the ITERS

Analysis of the ITERS findings allows us to conclude that the educational patterns in the infant sections and the young toddler and toddler sections differ in the day care centres of the province of Pavia. By educational pattern we mean a coherent set of practices, rituals, relational patterns, types of intervention in the running of activity and routine operations, disciplinary

strategies, continuity and interruption of activities, material provision - spaces, toys and equipment - and the implicit or explicit aims of the care givers.

As we have shown in the foregoing analysis, there are two basic educational patterns in the sections of the day care centre, highlighted also by previous research work: the first, which characterizes the infant section, is more "maternal" - centred on the physical needs of the child and therefore on routine moments, the affective relation and sensorial stimulation - on the absence, that is of opportunities for learning guided by educational aims. The second pattern, in the young toddler and toddler sections, is more structured, with the presence of activities and experiences which organize intellectual learning and the acquisition of social norms.

The survey tool used, the ITERS, highlights the different educational patterns in a very general way and does not allow the more specific features of the social situations which the children go through during their day at the centre to be identified. We thus consider that it is necessary to investigate in more detail some of the aspects of these dissimilar educational patterns which do not only differ between sections for different age ranges (eg., infants and toddlers) but also between sections for the same age range in different day care centres.

We decided to begin to define some ecological parameters for the observation of individual sections in order to integrate the data gathered more analytically. The purpose is to identify some elements of the educational pattern, for example the level of continuity-discontinuity of the educational setting and the patterns of transition from one social setting to another. We define a social setting, with Goffman, as a spatial setting in which two or more individuals in close contact are conditioned in some way by each other's presence; the situation comes to an end when the penultimate person goes away.

The observation criteria, which are at present being refined by visiting day care centres and are still in an initial phase, take into consideration: the spaces which are the theatre of the opportunities for social interaction and for the various learning experiences; the activities - the type and the aim of the activity, their scheduling through the day and the presence of continuity in their contents or otherwise; the patterns of supervision of social situations - whether the activities that take place within a social situation are decided by the care giver or not and the extent to which he is personally involved in their supervision; the patterns of socialization - the individuals participating in a situation and the patterns by which the activity is carried out (when this is decided on by the care giver these can be classed as individual tasks, tasks assigned to pairs or small groups, and group activity, if open to the children as free associations); the frequency of the various social situations - rare, sporadic or regular; the materials which are used; the

patterns of transition to the following social situations - which may be chaotic, dominated by strict discipline or by ritual.

The development of this observational tool, although still in its early stages, has allowed us to note, if still very approximately, that the differences between infant sections and young toddler and toddler sections are very great. Compared to the toddler sections, the young toddler sections are characterized by short activities, which are fragmentary, begun and quickly abandoned. The care giver, who is dominated by the frenetic behavior and the inconstancy of the children, moves continually, proposes an activity and if she does not quickly succeed in getting the group involved, abandons it, and relies on the materials and spatial organization to create opportunities for socialization. Indeed the social situation is characterized by pluri-focused groups which rapidly divide and come together with different composition for other activities. Things are very different in the toddler sections, where considering the higher level of ability of the children, it is easier for the care giver to follow the structured model which is characteristic of educational provision for the 3-6 years age range.

These preliminary observations are helping us to attempt to define parameters of observation which are sensitive enough to identify as large a number as possible of those elements which characterize and regulate the social situations (eg., number, type and development of the groups), so as to define the more specific aspects of the educational and social experience of the children in the day care centre.